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LETTER DATED 25 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the address to the members of the Security Council by the President of Georgia, H.E. Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze.

May I ask your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 22 January 1999 from the President of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council

Let me extend to you my heartfelt greetings and sincere appreciation for your tremendous work and dedication to the cause of peace and security on our planet.

Your tireless efforts to restore my country to peace and plenty, as well as the personal contributions of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to the same objective, and the unabated commitment to reaching a comprehensive political settlement in Abkhazia on the part of Friends of the Secretary-General and of the brave men and women of international personnel are truly invaluable.

Regrettably, our joint efforts still run against insurmountable obstacles and do not allow us to stand on a common ground leading to the comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

There is no end in the offing to the suffering of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons whose physical and moral conditions are unspeakable. This ongoing problem negatively affects the country's political and economic situation.

Impunity and violence against the returnees in the villages of the Gali region are still going on, and the fragile peace remains seriously threatened.

Today, when the international community is about to mark out and direct the United Nations future efforts, I presume to come up with the evaluation of some important aspects.

It is clear that the separatist regime is carrying out a well planned obstruction of every peace initiative. Attacks from territory under their control against the villages on the left bank of the Inguri River have become intensive, and the measures taken to stop them are skilfully used to justify the obstruction of the quadripartite working meetings.

The propagandist statements about the operations of the so-called Abkhaz militia against the imaginary bandits and subsequent punitive operations against peaceful civilians have become a well established modus operandi.

Every once in a while we hear the groundless criticism of international organizations and of the Government of Georgia which allegedly hamper the return of the refugees and displaced persons to their homes. All this at a time when last May we witnessed other large-scale violence against the Georgian population, clearly constituting the internationally recognized policy of ethnic cleansing.

Absurd statements have been made about the non-existent amphibious operation of Georgians on the sea coast. The false propaganda among the Abkhaz

population to discredit the Georgian Government and to kindle the ethnic hatred has a prevailing intensity.

In the light of this activity, the separatists have created insurmountable obstacles to the elaboration of the vital documents of the peace process that were purported to define the measures for the return of refugees, maintenance of peace and for the economic rehabilitation of the region.

What is more important, it prevented a holding of a meeting where these documents were to be signed. Had the meeting taken place, it would have undoubtedly enhanced the obligations of the parties and created a realistic ground for holding the violators of reached agreements responsible. It definitely does not play into the hands of the separatists and their supporters.

The social and economic infrastructure of the Abkhazian region has been completely demolished under the separatist regime. The tendency of drug addiction and alcoholism among youth has been prevalent. The region has been abandoned by the majority of the population.

It is clear that the rekindling of the Abkhazian problem is conducive to the plans of certain forces. It definitely bears a political character and has far-reaching plans. This situation deteriorates the tension in the whole Caucasian region and radically contradicts the interests of both the Abkhaz and the Georgians.

Serious attention should be paid to the implementation of the decisions of the Security Council and, more importantly, to the elaboration and adoption of future, more outspoken and demanding resolutions.

The artificially created Abkhazian problem puts face-to-face two positions: the first envisions the efforts aimed at the strengthening of tolerance, economic growth and peaceful coexistence of different ethnicities. The second is built upon criminal political ambitions and interests, with all of their grave consequences.

The present situation compels us to be principled and to take decisive steps. The starting of the process of the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes has the utmost importance. Parallel to this process, solid security conditions must be created for the returnees, and they should be guaranteed not just by rhetoric but by concrete steps, which will be supported by the Georgian Government and viewed as a measure for confidence-building between the parties.

In order to prompt this process, it is necessary to define the international status of the returnees, lest anybody use their condition for sordid political plans.

The creation of security conditions largely depends on the complete discharge of the mandate by the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). It is in a way connected with the creation of security conditions for their own activities.

Georgia pledges to take all necessary measures for its ultimate success and believes that this question will remain on the agenda of the Security Council.

The stabilization of the situation is clearly in the best interests of all good-will countries and the strengthening of the role of the international community in this process can undoubtedly play a decisive role.

We attach special importance to the meeting of the parties that took place in Athens. The meeting clearly indicated the huge potential which lies in the informal relationships between people. We pay homage to the Government of Greece and, notwithstanding the imminent obstacles, we should actively support the development of this initiative.

The development and promotion of the human rights aspect of the activities of the Observer Mission can play an important role in the establishment of tolerance between the parties. I think we are capable of working out an effective programme of action for this important mechanism.

Regrettably, the activation and functioning of joint investigative groups runs into serious obstacles. They were called upon to investigate violations of reached agreements, since the bringing out of the truth has an overriding importance not for mutual incriminations but for consolidating the forces of good will. We hope that the Security Council will support the strengthening of UNOMIG with this legal component which should define the direction of investigative activities.

The political activities of UNOMIG should also be strengthened. It will contribute to the activities of the Coordinative Council, in accordance with the Geneva agreement, and add a new component of international governance to it.

We attach great importance to the activities of UNOMIG in the field of public information. The entire population of Georgia, and particularly that of the conflict zone, must be well informed about the peace efforts of the international community. Under certain circumstances objective information can play a decisive role in conflict settlement.

We are gravely concerned at the fact of attacks on the peacekeepers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). We are fully aware of the damage it can cause to the peace process, and it totally contradicts our interests.

These facts require thorough investigation and due assessment. At the same time it is important to seriously consider the prospect of the implementation of the peacekeeper's mandate recommended by the Council of Heads of State.

It is inadmissible to remain indifferent to the facts of taking sides and participation in armed clashes on the part of certain personnel of the CIS peacekeepers. At the same time, it would be reasonable to think about the concrete proposals about enhancing the effectiveness of international monitoring of the CIS peacekeeping operation.

The CIS peacekeeping operation, and the Russian Federation as facilitator, has huge unutilized resources in the settlement of the conflict. We express hope that effective measures will be taken to fully employ these resources.

The role of the Friends of the Secretary-General, consisting of States of world authority, has special importance in the comprehensive settlement of the conflict. I am confident that, with their assistance, we will work out a plan of action which will lead us step-by-step to the ultimate success.

At the same time, the international community should be aware of the consequences of the escalation of the conflict and be ready for applying the method of peace enforcement.

The elimination of this hotbed in the Caucasus, together with complex peace efforts, requires the consideration of the use of force.

Excellencies, I am strongly confident that the Council will afford due consideration to our suggestions. I am also convinced that nowhere else but here, in the halls of the world organization, can we find ways to the peaceful and negotiated settlement of our problem.